

Newsletter May 2022

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



A warm welcome to our latest newsletter. This edition is devoted to updating supporters about the latest twists and turns in respect of the Racecourse Approach (RA) development saga.

Better Wetherby (BW) had a very useful meeting on 12 May with the builders Taylor Wimpey (TW) regarding progress on the planning conditions for the development. New design plans were shared by TW and discussed in advance of a meeting due to be held between TW and Leeds City Council (LCC) planning officials.

It is pleasing to report that many of suggestions made by BW in the lengthy Design Workshop process, conducted over a period of many months, have been taken on board. However, my colleagues and I remain extremely concerned about the impact of air and noise pollution. We have flagged up our concerns to TW and asked that they carry our further work to put in place measures to mitigate these problems. Please see more about this in the piece below.

In the April newsletter we reported that as part of the Jubilee festivities to mark Her Majesty the Queen's 70th anniversary as monarch, BW and other local organisations would be having displays in the Market Square on Saturday, 4th June. Unfortunately the community displays will not now be taking place on that date. However, people can look forward to an enjoyable Jubilee programme of music, sports, exhibitions and entertainment for all age groups.

I know, dear reader that you have heard this from me before, but we really do need additional support for our efforts on behalf of our town and community.

We are still looking for a Treasurer and for people who may have technical expertise in specific business situations. We understand the busy lives people lead these days, but please consider helping our efforts. If you feel you can give up a little of your time to help, please get in touch. The contact details are shown in this newsletter and can also be found on the website. Alternatively, if you would care to contact me directly on 07973 805055 or email at roger.owen.3@btopenworld.com I will be pleased to provide more information.

Thanks for reading.

Roger Owen

Chair: **Better Wetherby Partnership**

RA DEVELOPMENT – SWINNOW PARK

Over many months BW has taken part in the various Design Workshops hosted by TW covering many aspects of this massive development. It is basically a totally new settlement that will place significant pressures on all aspects of our Town, be that demand on school places, medical facilities and other services, along with the thorny problem of increased traffic that will inevitably lead to congestion and poorer air quality.

As previously reported, the BW input in the Design Workshops, together with that of Wetherby Civic Society (WCS), Town Council and Ward Councillors, has been significant and constructive, resulting in almost 50 Conditions being imposed on TW when Outline Planning Consent was granted some months ago. Over the past 12 months or so, BW and our partners have been working hard to hold

Working to ensure that the physical character of Wetherby and District is protected and developed for the benefit of the community of both current and future generations.

both TW and LCC Planners 'feet to the fire' to ensure the aim of achieving an exemplar scheme is achieved, this being the best outcome we could hope for given the site was allocated for residential development in the Leeds Site Allocation Plan process, itself the result of public scrutiny.

We have reported in a previous newsletter that BW representatives attended a meeting of Leeds Plans Panel on 10th March where TW updated Councillors on progress being made towards a full blown Reserved Matters Planning Application which will need to satisfy all the 50 or so Conditions of the Outline Consent. Coverage of that meeting is available to watch on the LCC YouTube channel (see our [website for the link & timings](#)). Following that meeting BW made a series of comments, corrections etc. which are included on the [LCC Plans Portal](#) for general viewing.

On Thursday, 12th May, representatives of BW, along with our partners from WCS and Ward Councillor Norma Harrington, attended an exclusive briefing meeting with TW at which we were presented with a much revised and improved scheme for RA which now includes many of the positive elements BW have been looking for. To cover them in detail would need a small book, but in summary:

- More landscaping.
- More play areas.
- Allotments and orchard spaces.
- Planting of trees to replace previously storm damaged or dead trees.
- Dwellings built from 2025 onwards, when new building regulations take effect, will include heat pumps in lieu of gas boilers, underfloor heating, solar panels, triple glazing, EV charging points and more. Some of those elements, such as EV charging points, will also be included in the first dwellings pre the introduction of the 2025 regulations.
- Better walkways.
- Bin collection points.
- A controlled crossing point on York Road to improve pedestrian safety; this was much pushed by BW.
- Inclusion of some bungalow accommodation and more one and two bed housing.

The original site allocation allows TW to build up to 800 new homes. Initially TW planned to build 785 dwellings but as a result of the revised plans, the number of dwellings to be built will now be 797. However, despite this increase, the site footprint itself is unchanged with the additional homes coming from reducing / splitting some existing structures into two.

There remains a major point of concern for BW relating to noise and air pollution issues, specific to Conditions 31 and 32 Of the Outline Planning Consent. Since the grant of Outline Consent, BW has contended that these key elements, which arise principally from the high volume of traffic on the A1(M), have not been given the appropriate and detailed level of attention to minimise or eliminate the health risks to residents. BW previously raised these concerns prior to the Public exhibition in February, at the Plans Panel meeting in March and in separate correspondence to LCC Planners. At the meeting of 12th May, BW put TW on notice that we would be raising this matter again and subsequently a further letter was sent to the LCC Planners. This can now be viewed on the [Public Access/Planning Portal](#). BW is at a loss to understand why LCC have not employed their own expert consultants to check the points raised by BW. Further submissions will be made urging LCC to take that course of action. The serious health risks posed by air and noise pollution are well documented, so taking the necessary action to address the problem at this early stage is essential.

Information, documents and plans regarding the development can be viewed on the LCC planning portal (ref. no. 21/08506/RM) where you are also able to [add your own comments](#). Further details and links are available on our website: (<https://www.betterwetherby.com/racecourse-approach.html>)

RA SEWAGE ISSUES

BW have reported previously about discharges of sewage into the River Wharfe. A polluted river presents serious health risks. So there is concern about how Yorkshire Water (YW) will be able to cope with and manage the additional pressures arising from the building of up to 800 new homes and consequently a large growth in the local population. In April, officers of the WCS met with representatives of YW to discuss this issue.

In summary, YW said that because of modifications to treatment in recent years, the capacity available for dealing with domestic waste had increased by 30% since 2019. The amount had actually been falling until 2018 due to the installation of water meters and modern dishwashers and washing machines using less water. Although the amount of actual domestic effluent increased in 2020, probably due to more people working from home during the COVID pandemic, YW believe that capacity is sufficient to meet additional planned housing until 2035. Moreover, due to continual monitoring, they are confident that they will be able to identify any trend which takes them close to hitting the limit.



However, the key problem is that of issues arising when there is heavy rainfall. Current requirements for new housing development are that effluent and surface run off should be kept separate and the surface run off should run into watercourses and not through sewage works. On the RA development surface water will be routed into holding ponds with a controlled discharge into Sand Beck, therefore the development should only impact on the sewage works with actual effluent, surface water being discharged northwards via watercourses into the River Nidd.

Although many current houses within Wetherby have separate effluent and surface water sewers, these often subsequently merge and rainfall severely increases the amount of liquid with which the sewage works has to cope. They achieve this by having storm tanks into which screened liquid (i.e. with about 90% of the solids removed), in excess of that which can be immediately treated, is stored. Once flows into treatment facility are lower than maximum capacity, this is transferred back into the main treatment. However, once treatment is working at full capacity and the storm tanks are full, the excess is transferred into the river. Apparently the current minimum storm tank capacity in the permit is 1,448m³ as against installed capacity of 1,812m³, and thus they meet their permit. The permit is to be changed to 1,712m³ in line with a forecasted population of 25,170 in 2030 and thus YW will still meet their permit.

That said, YW stated that in 2021, the storm tanks overflowed for 491 hours, i.e. 5.6% of the time, equivalent to 81 spills, discharging diluted sewage into the River Wharfe. This is a figure which seems to be amazingly high. During the three named storms in February/March 2022, a period of over 20 days, there was frequent discharge into the river. This is at present allowed under their permit, but a public government consultation on how to reduce discharges nationally has just finished.

The WCS concluded that:

- YW has planned for the increase of population producing more effluent.
- The number of spills is far too high and urgent national action is needed to resolve this problem. YW suggested that those concerned should take this matter up with their MP and local environmental groups to press for change.

Working to ensure that the physical character of Wetherby and District is protected and developed for the benefit of the community of both current and future generations.

WCS INVESTIGATIONS INTO WETHERBY'S LOST HISTORY – CAN YOU HELP?

Once all the planning conditions have been met for the RA development, building work will commence on the 800 house site. New housing will cover the remains of what was once an imposing house called Swinnow Hall. In 2021, West Yorkshire Archaeological Service (WYAS) investigated this land.



They found evidence of a Romano-British farm and of a building identified as Swinnow Hall (see photograph and also [BW website](#)). These were excavated and, working with WCS, an open day was arranged in January 2022, when on a murky cold day, over 100 people turned out to hear about the site and to view the finds. WYAS agreed that WCS should investigate, with their input, the history of Swinnow Hall, a previously forgotten part of Wetherby's history.

As a result of the investigation, it is now known that Swinnow (meaning Swine Hill) was owned by the Knights Templar and their heirs, the Knights Hospitallers, along with much of Wetherby. Upon the dissolution of the monasteries in 1540, their land became the possession of the Crown, but whilst Wetherby and many of its nearby fields reverted to the ownership of the Percy's (Earls of Northumberland) in 1552, Swinnow came into the possession of Christopher Estofte a lawyer from Scarborough, who in 1562 also bought the adjacent Ingmanthorpe estate. The story of Swinnow and Ingmanthorpe are subsequently closely entwined.

A map of 1771 shows a house called Swinnow and the subsequent map for the sale of Wetherby in 1824, shows Swinnow as belonging to Richard Fontayne Wilson, an extremely wealthy landowner who built Ingmanthorpe Hall in the early 1800s. Wilson died in 1847 and left all his estate to his son, Andrew, who had added the surname Montagu. Swinnow Hall seems to have been a country mansion which the family rented out to wealthy middle class families. The archaeology seems to bear this out with small amounts of decorated plaster being found. Identified residents between 1841 and 1891 include a land agent, a JP landowner, and finally a manufacturer from Halifax, each with between 6 and 9 servants. Andrew Montagu rented out Ingmanthorpe Hall during the early years of his ownership, only taking up residence by 1881.

Around 1880, a new drive was constructed connecting Swinnow Hall to the Wetherby to York turnpike (now the York Road), which had been built in the 1820s, and a gatehouse erected. Subsequently, the decision seems to have been made to connect Ingmanthorpe Hall to the Wetherby to York turnpike. At some time between 1893 and 1901, Swinnow Hall was razed to the ground, and its drive extended over the edge of the building to provide this connection. The new drive was lined with an avenue of trees, which can be seen to this day.

Research is continuing to try to establish further information about the history of the Hall, particularly the period between 1562 and 1771, and also who destroyed the Hall as Montagu died in 1895 and thus it may have been either he or his successor who ordered it. WCS would welcome anyone who has a photograph or drawing of the Hall or who has written information as to the Hall's history between 1562 and 1771. If you can help please contact Peter Catton, Vice Chairman of WCS by email on p.g.catton@gmail.com.



Better Wetherby Partnership Ltd
PO Box 755
Wetherby
LS22 9GA

INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT BW? CONTACT US:

If any local organisations wish to learn more about BW, a talk about our activities can be arranged.

We also very much welcome and encourage volunteers and supporters to assist our efforts.

Please contact us with any comments and queries. If you wish to be included on our mailing list please send a request by email to betterwetherby@gmail.com. Please feel free to share this newsletter - the more people that are aware of these important local issues, the better.

Working to ensure that the physical character of Wetherby and District is protected and developed for the benefit of the community of both current and future generations.

email: betterwetherby@gmail.com

web: www.betterwetherby.com

Facebook: [#BetterWetherbyPartnership](https://www.facebook.com/BetterWetherbyPartnership)